THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) The Expenditure Reforms Commission has submitted in all 10 reports covering 36 Ministries/Departments recommending rationalization of staff strength and cadre review of different services and on four specific issues namely, Food Subsidy, Fertilizer Subsidy, review of procedure of setting up of autonomous institutions and optimizing staff strength.

(c) Recommendations of Expenditure Reform Commission are at various stages of implementation. The Government has introduced a scheme whereby permanent employees declared surplus, *inter alia,* as a consequence of implementation of ERC recommendations will have an option for Special Voluntary Retirement Scheme.

Reduction of duty burden on AIDS for disabled persons

685. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Customs duties on aids and appliances for disabled are at par and often higher to consumer goods like Computers, TVs, components of Cellular phones etc.;

(b) whether any study has been conducted in the matter; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps being taken to reduce the duty burden on goods for disabled persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Aids and appliances presently attract varying rates of customs duty. However, specified goods imported by disabled persons for personal use are fully exempt from customs duty.

(b)The Government had constituted a Committee in December, 2002 on Concessions/Exemptions of Customs/Excise Duties on Aids and Appliances for person with Disabilities, to review various customs and excise duty exemptions/concessions to disabled persons or institution and to make proposals for the consideration of the Government. This Committee has submitted its report in January, 2003.

(c) The said committee has *inter alia* recommended to exempt all kind of aids and appliances meant for person with disabilities from the purview of customs and excise duties. In regards to existing exemptions/ concessions, the Committee has recommended periodical review and has suggested certain changes in procedures and conditions for availing these concessions. As regards reduction in duty burden on goods for disabled person, no comments can be furnished at this stage in view of the ensuing budget.

Structural Adjustment Loans

686. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to impose stricter guidelines on the State Governments seeking structural adjustment loans from multilateral institutions;

(b) if so, the details of guidelines proposed to be imposed on the State Governments; and

(c) the measures Government propose to take to reduce the fiscal deficit of the States to less than three per cent of States' domestic product?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) Government of India have issued guidelines to ensure certain common criteria as a prerequisite for assessing Structural Adjustment Loans (SAL) from multilateral institutions, by different States.The guidelines are given in the enclosed Statement (See below).

(c)The State Governments have to propose their structural adjustment strategy to achieve these fiscal goals as part of their structural adjustment programme consistent with the States' Medium Term Fiscal Reforms Programme (MTFRP) to be drawn up pursuant to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India within the States' Fiscal Reforms Facility (2000-05).